

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion about a new rule guaranteeing that health insurers provide free access to contraception, as well as confusion about how this rule affects people of faith. So what is the debate about?

It starts with a provision in the health reform law that certain preventive services should be offered to an insured employee without a co-pay or deductible. This provision makes sense. Many people do not get needed preventive services because they cannot afford them, and the result is often less than optimal health.

The Institute of Medicine, which was charged with making recommendations about what should be considered good, standard, preventive care, determined that contraception should be covered. This makes sense also. Decades of evidence show that contraception coverage reduces health care costs, improves health, and decreases maternal and infant mortality. Planned births result in improved health of mothers and infants. Denying coverage for such standard health care would require women to pay out-of-pocket for their basic preventive care.

Nearly all American women, including women of faith, have used contraception sometimes, and a clear majority of Americans support removing the cost-sharing requirement for prescription contraceptive coverage. Yet some religious leaders have voiced concern: they oppose contraception for religious reasons, and they believe that they should not be required to cover its costs for their employees. In recognition of their views, the contraceptive rule exempts all churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious organizations.

The exemption does not apply to organizations engaging in actions that are beyond their religious observance. For example, an organization like Catholic Charities or a religious bookstore, although religiously motivated, performs services similar to other secular organizations and may not discriminate in hiring, firing, or other employment practices. Because these institutions are part of the broader business world, it is important that their employees have access to the same standard insurance as every other employee in the nation – yet it is important, too, to recognize these organizations' religious background and heritage.

Toward this end, the President recently acted to allow to these organizations to decline to pay for contraception coverage for their employees. However, their insurance companies would have to provide affected employees with prescription contraception coverage without a co-pay

or deductible. Evidence shows that this coverage would not impose new costs upon insurers.

I support the President's decision and will continue to work in Congress to ensure that all Americans have access to comprehensive health care coverage.

Towns Halls in West Windsor and North Brunswick on Saturday

On Saturday, February 25, I'll be holding town hall meetings in North Brunswick and in West Windsor. I hope you will attend to share your thoughts and concerns about the issues that matter most to you.

North Brunswick Town Hall

10:00 a.m., Saturday, February 25
North Brunswick Municipal Court Chambers
710 Hermann Road
North Brunswick, New Jersey

West Windsor Town Hall

1:00 p.m., Saturday, February 25
Council Chambers
West Windsor Municipal Complex
271 Clarksville Road
West Windsor, New Jersey

Princeton's Kwame Anthony Appiah Presented with National Humanities Medal

Earlier this month, I had the chance to join our neighbor Kwama Anthony Appiah at the White House, where he and several others were [honored with the National Humanities Medal](#) for their extraordinary work to deepen America's understanding of the humanities.

The President recognized Mr. Appiah “for seeking eternal truths in the contemporary world. His books and essays within and beyond his academic discipline have shed moral and intellectual light on the individual in an era of globalization and evolving group identities.”

Currently I am reading his book *The Honor Code*.

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress